THE

EVIDENCE;

OR,

Religious and Moral Gazette.

RELIGION AND MORALITY ARE THE BASIS OF HUMAN FELICITY.

VOL. I.] APRIL 25, 1807. [No. 15.

No. V.

TO YOUNG PEOPLE, &c.

Introduction to the Evidences of the divine authenticity of the Scriptures.

IT is the object of the writer in this number, to give you a succinct view of that part of the argument which confirms the scriptures to be divine, resulting from miracle and prophecy. This argument, though a common one, is not on that account the less conclusive and weighty. It being intended to place this subject in different lights, that in the issue we might have a collected view of what is material, it would be an unwarranted omission to overlook the testimony presented from such an extensive field.

MIRACLE is a work of God taking place out of the common course of events: or it is an action of God distinct from his usual mode of operation, causing something, not to be accounted for from any known principles or laws by which he governs the natural and moral world. Miracles are never wrough by God unless to answer some vastly important purpose which could not be accomplished without; and whenever they are wrought, God is pleased to give evidence that the effect is the fruit of his own efficiency and not the effect of creature agency.

THAT works of this description have been wrought by God is abundantly evident; and the end for which they have been wrought is as perfectly obvious.

GOD'S end in all the miracles he has ever produced has been the same. The sole end has been to corroborate the truth of his word.

THAT the scriptures, when first promulgated, might be received as coming from God, it was necessary he should not only set to them his own signature, but confirm them by such visible manifestations, as should conform their divine original. A series of such works were necessary till the canon of scripture should be completed, and were in fact continued till all the books were finished as we now have them in the two testaments. Some few of these miracles I shall notice and the certainty of their being the immediate effects of divine action.

THE miracles wrough by Moses in Egypt, gave full proof that he was divinely assisted. The effects could not be accounted for, from any power but that of God. It is true, the miracles wrought by Moses, were at first called in question. Pharaoh and the magicians warmly contested

Moses' divine mission and the power by which he acted. He was at naught as an impostor claiming that to which he was not entitled. Accordingly the Magicians laid claim to the same power. Whatever Moses did, they undertook to imitate. They followed him to all the extent of of their art, till at length, they were necessitated to give Moses the superiority, and to acknowledge his miracles to be wrought by the finger of God. This was the confession of enemies, whose interest it was to depreciate Moses and defeat his mission. The confession was from a conviction they could not suppress. They were constrained to a declaration ruinous to themselves, and at the same time giving to Moses authority from God.

The miracles Moses wrought were not in a solitary corner, or in the sight of a few persons only: The effects were seen and felt by the whole nation, exactly alike and at the same time. These wonders took place suddenly and at a word. They were numerous and various, and so often repeated, as to produce entire conviction in the mind of Pharaoh and his hosts. It was from this conviction and nothing else that Pharaoh consented that the Israelites should leave the kingdom. There was great reluctance on the part of the Egyptians in giving the children of Israel this liberty. As affairs were managed, it was exceedingly against their interest. They had the service of nearly six hundred thousand people without any compensation. It was still more against the proud Monarch of Egypt to part with such a vast number of servants.—And nothing would have ever brought him to it except the miraculous power of God, clearly exhibited in a series of the most astonishing works which were ever wrought.

The Miracles of Moses at the red sea in dividing the waters were seen by two whole nations. The fact was fully believed by each and every individual present.

Moses repeated his miracles in the wilderness. Succeeding ages celebrated them.

The Law was pronounced by God himself from Mount Sinai in the hearing of all Israel. In all this there was no room for deception. An individual in a fright may be deceived in a matter of sudden transaction. But it is incredible that a whole nation should be deceived in this most plain address to the sight and hearing. If men are led to believe a falshood through imposition, the mistake is soon rectified; but it appears, that not so much as one of the whole nation doubted for a moment of what they had seen and heard at Mount Sinai. From this period were wrought a series of miracles till the coming of Christ. The waters of Jordan opened for the children of Israel to pass through dry-shod. By a miracle the wall of Jericho fell. Many incidents in the life of Gideon, were miraculous. Elijah and Elisha exhibited an uninterrupted series of events which gave decisive evidence of the finger of God. At the incarnation of Christ a new star made its appearance, a phenomenon which convened the wise men of the east to the place of his nativity.

The miracles of our Lord proved beyond a question, his divine authority. They never failed to produce conviction. Enemies as well as friends resorted to him. He was thronged by the sick and dying, and those maladies which no human means could reach, went instantly at his word, or at so much as the touch of his garment. The ten

pestuous sea was calmed at his rebuke. Devils yielded to his power and the possessed were restored to their right mind. The miracles of Christ were never called in question. His enemies ascribed them to Bellzebub the prince of devils, but the facts were never denied, The miracles Christ wrought by the apostles were no less astonishing. These miraculous gifts continued in the church during the Apostolic age, and were not entirely withholden during a length of time succeeding, as appears from the testimony of the fathers. Now lay these miracles together which were frequently repeated during a period of more than two thousand years and can there be any doubt respecting the truth of the religion they are intended to evince?

THE prophecies are so many living witnesses to the truth of God's word. We know it to be beyond the limits of a finite mind to look into futurity and ascertain with precision events, especially such as have no *data*, and are to a high degree improbable in themseves. Such events were foretold by Christ and the prophets and apostles. Moses in his farewell address to the children of Israel, informed them of the events which would befall them, in case they should revolt from God. In describing these evils Moses was very particular. He foretells them of enemies who should rise up against them, terrible and fierce, whose eye should not pity nor spare them. That they should be beseiged on every side, and be driven to the greatest extremity of distress. That they should pant for lack of food, through the straightness of the siege. That the eye of the husband should be evil towards the wife of his youth; that the mother should not spare her tender offspring, for the want of all things secretly in the siege, and straightness wherewith the enemy should distress them in the gates. In short, Moses gives a particular description of the distruction of Jerusalem by the Romans and the calamities which should come on the Jews in their despersion among the nations of the earth. Those who will take the pains of reading the 28th Chap. of Numbers and comparing it with Josephus' account of the calamities of the Jews, under the oppressions of the Romans, will see a complete harmony between the prophet and the historian.

JACOB in the blessing pronounced on Judah, predicts the Saviour and the line of his descent. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until *Shiloh* come." This tribe held the sceptre. Christ was of the tribe of Judah and lineage of David. Moses prophecied of Christ; that a prophet should the Lord God raise up like unto himself, and to him the gathering of the nations should be. As we come nearer to the period of Christ's incarnation, the prophets are more particular and explicit. They name the place of his birth, and the time of his descent. They tell us, that he should be betrayed for money, and by a professed friend; and that he should be cut off for the sins of the world. Christ during his public ministry, predicted the destruction of the temple and the dispersion of the Jews. St. Paul describes the man of sin and the Romish hierarchy under which the church groaned for more than twelve centuries. The world has beheld the fulfilment of the prophecies. The preservation of the Jews as a distinct people is a living witness for God, that the scriptures are of divine original. And is not this an argument of great weight? Can the sober reflecting mind help

feeling its force, since it is the testimony of fact—living fact? Will any one say the scriptures are a forgery of designing men, amid such a full blaze of testimony which environs them? Can it be conceived that any man or body of men would undertake to establish a religion and impose it on the world by such means? Must they not know the undertaking to be beyond the power of execution without detection? Would it not be a most vain assumption for any combination of men now living to form a new system of religion for the world and confirm it by miracle and prophecy? We know the human faculties unequal to such a task. Has any ancient body of men had more ability, or greater acuteness of discernment? Have not the arts been generally progressing up to this time; and is it to be supposed that the less improved should impose on the better informed of succeeding ages, so as to induce them to give credit to an impious falshood, as a revelation from God? We know that human artifice is liable to detection; but not a single fault has yet been discovered in this book. Prophecies have been followed by their respective accomplishments in a succession which settles a foundation for the reliance of our faith, which bids defiance te the most formidable opposition from earth and hell. The more this source of argument is examined, the more will its conclusiveness appear. New light will succeed each candid research: and should the ardor of humble and faithful inquiry be continued, the last doubts will give way to it, and you will be left in the possession of an attainment, you would not barter for the whole world.

E.

COMMUNICATION.

For the EVIDENCE.

At a certain time Jesus Christ wrought a miracle by casting a devil out of a dumb man. To the Pharisees this transaction gave great uneasiness. The *fact* they could not deny; for it was done publicly, and every body knew it was true. To acknowledge that Jesus "by the finger of God," cast out devils, would amount to an implicit acknowledgement that he was the Messiah. What then could they do? They could think of no way to evade the force of this conclusion, but to say, "He casteth out devils through the prince of devils."

Although our Saviour sufficiently exposed the folly of this evasion, yet, some modern opposers of christianity are not ashamed to take much the same ground. Little objections are advanced against christianity, which evidently show that those who advance them are seeking for objections and are glad to find them.

Some people object to Jesus Christ because of his *humble appearance*, when on the earth. It would much better correspond with their notions of propriety, had he assumed worldly greatness. But if Christ had appeared with all the worldly greatness which such objectors suppose would be right, would they not still object and say, "What man could not obtain followers, and propagate any sentiments, who had so much worldly greatness to assist him?" Undoubtedly they would have alledged that Christ's worldly greatness was convincing proof of his being a designing usurper, and that his success principally depended upon it.

Some object to the four gospels, because they do not all relate exactly the same particulars, and in the same order, in the history of Jesus Christ. But if they had exactly agreed in every particular circumstance, would not such objectors then complain and say, "The whole is a made up story, and the writers all combined in telling it?" The history of Jesus Christ, contained in the gospels, is just such a history as reasonable men would expect, allowing that he really *was*, and *did*, all that the gospels ascribe to him. There are all the marks of truth which are to be expected in any true history. The writers, it is true, do not all of them relate exactly the same circumstances, and no others, nor are they all related in the same order. And this is never to be found in any number of historians in writing on the same subject. One writer will mention some particulars which the others omit; and one will take one order of events, and another, another order.

Some suppose, that, if God has given a revelation to man, he ought to give it to all men alike; and, as the bible is in the hands of only a part of mankind, it cannot be a revelation from God. But, if all men had the bible, and from the beginning had been acquainted with its contents, would not these very objectors say, that it is not a special revelation from God, but is received by the light of nature; for, all men have it? As some of the human race now exist destitute of the revelation contained in the scriptures, they exist as a specimen to teach us what *all* men would have been, were it not for the light of the scriptures.

There is evidently a propensity in mankind to believe *that* to be true which they *wish* to have true; and to disbelieve that which they wish to have false. And in nothing perhaps, is this propensity more discoverable than in matters of religion.

The scriptures abundantly testify that unholy men are inimical to the christian religion. The employments of this religion, are not such employments, nor the happiness which it confers, such a happiness, as wicked men wish to have. Also, if the christian religion is true, certain it is that dreadful evils are reserved for the finally impenitent. Such considerations render christianity very disgusting to unholy minds.

This bias against christianity has great influence over the understanding and judgment. It helps to diminish the arguments which are in favor of christianity, and to magnify those which are against it. It will cover over religious truth, and make it appear very doubtful whether such truth exists; and it will set religious error in such an engageing point of view as to give it the appearance of truth.

It is impossible to satisfy one who is seeking for objections and is glad to find them. If matters were exactly as such an objector now says would be right, he would not be satisfied, but still would object and say they ought to be some other way.

Many modern cavillers against the christian religion are not unlike the Jews in our Saviour's time. They found fault with John the forerunner of Christ, because he was too unsociable. "John came neither eating nor drinking." He dwelt some part of the time in the wilderness, and his meat was locust and wild honey. But such an unsociable mode of living appeared to

the Jews quite improper. Therefore, they said, that "John had a devil." But when Christ came, he associated with all sorts of men, and ate and drank with them. Yet the Jews were no better pleased with him, than they had been with John. Because "The son of man came eating and drinking" they called him "gluttonous and a wine bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners." He fitly compared them to children in the market, who would neither be pleased with merriment nor mourning.

WICKED men are not so canded and impartial in their researches after religious truth, as they often suppose. There is danger of the understanding's being darkened because of the blindness of the heart. If therefore, any find that the christian religion does not correspond with their notions of propriety, is it not much safer and more candid and honest, to suspect the error to lie in themselves, than in this religion?

IOTA.

A LETTER TO A BROTHER.

THIS day commences the fortieth year of my life; and when I look back, how short it appears! And probably the greatest part of my days are already numbered and finished. Such a reflection should press upon me the great importance of filling up what remains with usefulness and duty.

As you are my only brother, you must be sensible that my affections for you are peculiarly strong. You are every day the subject of my thoughts and prayers; and I hope you will not consider it unkind in me, if I address you in a serious and solemn manner. I have been wishing, for some time, to write to you; but a multiplicity of business has hitherto prevented. Yet as delays are always dangerous, I am determined to omit it no longer.

WE were early dedicated to God in baptism, and have had, in our youth, much religious instruction. We have undoubtedly been the subjects of many parental supplications. How often have we been carried to the throne of grace in the arms of prayer! We have become men, and heads of families, and the duties devolving upon us are indeed weighty. We have children to train up to be vessels of wrath, or vessels of mercy, and their future happiness or misery, under God, greatly depends on us. And it is certain, that we must meet our children in another world, where we must give an account how we have discharged our duty towards them—how we have fulfilled all the divine requirements, and how we have improved our mercies and afflictions. God has given us his revealed word, and told us that we must be holy here, or we can never be happy hereafter. It will avail us nothing, could we posses the whole of this world, if we are not rich towards God.

You, my dear brother, have shared largely in the divine goodness, and are, therefore, under correspondent obligations to your gracious benefactor. God blessed you with a worthy companion, who was willing to encourage you in the duties of religion, and who has left you two little pledges of conjugal love. But for wise reasons, he who gave, saw fit to snatch her from you, and cloathe you with sackcloth. In that sore affliction your mind was impressed, and you seemed to feel

the importance of religion. I am sensible that you treat it and its professors with becoming respect. And I approve of the sentiment contained in the following sentences in your letter to —— "If religion has a friend, who is not a professor of it, I really think myself to be one." I had rather possess the good opinion of the beggar on the dunghill, if a real christian, than the prince on the throne, if an infidel." This certainly shows a veneration for religion. But, sir, the great question is, have you real religion at heart? Has Christ been formed within you the hope of glory? If so, it becomes you to confess him before men, and maintain a christian walk. But if not, how dangerous is your situation! and every day renders it more so!

As we are all dependent on God, it becomes us to acknowledge our dependence, and go to him for the blessings we need. Prayer is a duty, which you will permit me, once more, to urge upon you with all the earnestness of an affectionate brother, and I trust your new and worthy companion will be willing to exert herself to encourage you in the same duty.

How reasonable is it when we rise in the morning, that we should unitedly with our families acknowledge the providence of God in our preservation, and implore his continued mercies, assistance and protection? You plead your inability. But I cannot feel that there is much weight in the excuse. If you want any thing of a fellow creature, you can find language to ask for it. Why then can you not express your wants both spiritual and temporal, to your heavenly Father, who only is able to supply them? We have the greatest encouragement to this duty in the word of God: "Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually." "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever." (I Chron, xvi. 11, and xxviii, 29.) "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." (Prov. viii. 17.) "And ye shall seek me, and shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." (Jer. xxix. 13.) "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. (Luke xxxi. 36.) The apostle exhorts to "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." Col. iv. 2.) To the Thess. he says, "Pray without ceasing." That is, be in a praying frame, and never forget, nor suffer your daily seasons for prayer to pass unimproved. The apostle Peter exhorts thus: "Be ye sober, and watch unto prayer." The bible is full of exhortations to this duty, and I think we cannot omit it and be blameless.

Do, my dear brother, think seriously of these things, and let not the fear of a scoffing world, deter you from duty. Begin, if you have not already, and persevere, and you will never regret it. If you find yourself embarrassed through diffidence, prepare a form, and commit it to memory, and begin in that way; and you will soon find yourself able to overcome all your difficulties arising from diffidence.

For such dependent creatures, as we are, prayer is surely a most reasonable duty. How reasonable that we should go to God morning and evening with our families, and implore his blessing and protection, and the influences of his spirit, which we alway need.

But I will desist, with only intreating you not to be so much cumbered about much serving, as to neglect the one thing needful? but, above all things, to make sure of that good part which shall never be taken from you. For the present, I will wish you good night, imploring for you, divine mercy, and everlasting blessings.

From your sincerely
affectionate brother,
D.

(E. Mag.)

JERUSALEM.

The number of houses at present in Jerusalem is between 3 and 4 thousand: its inhabitants are estimated at, Turks 10,000; Greeks 1,000; Franks 1,000; Armenians 1,000; Jews 3,500. Sir Sidney Smith is said to be the first christian, who since the Turks have had possession of Jerusalem, has been allowed to enter in the dress of a Frank, or to carry arms within the city. The same privilege was extended to his officers.

PREACHING.

To preach practical sermons, as they are called, i. e. sermons upon virtues, without inculcating those great scripture truths of redemption, grace, &c. which alone can incite aud enable us to forsake sin, and follow after righteousness, what is it but to put together the wheels, and set the hands of a watch, forgetting the *spring*, which is to make them all go?

(App. to Bp. Horne's Life.)

POETRY.

Father, how dead and cold I feel,
No heartfelt grief, for sins appear;
I'm sleepy, dull and languid still,
Ah do I love, or trust or fear!

Am I a child, O God, of thine?
Do I thy holy laws revere;
Is Jesus Christ my God and friend,
And is my heart at all sincere?

Oh, shew me mighty God I pray,
The dreadful danger I am in!
Oh, shew me where my feet do stray,
Oh, shew me all my sin!

B.

☞ As No. 13 completed the first quarter, the readers of the Evidence will be pleased to recognize the conditions and make remittance as soon as possible. Those who receive the Evidence by mail, will remit to Dr. Thomas O'H. Croswell, Post-Master, Catskill, who is appointed agent to receive such sums as may be forwarded.

Communications for the Religious and Moral Gazette, free of postage, will be gratefully received.

FROM THE PRESS OF M. CROSWELL, *CATSKILL.*
Terms.—To subscribers in town, two dollars *a year, in quarterly payments —By mail,* one dollar fifty cents—*To post-riders and others, who take* twenty-five *or more, weekly, and become responsible, reasonable allowance will be made.*